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Statement to the U.S. Coal Commission by...

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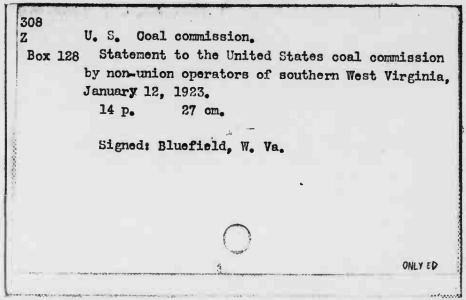

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Box 128 Statement to the United States coal commission by non-union operators of southern West Virginia, January 12, 1923.
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Signed: Bluefield, W. Va.

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STATEMENT

TO THE

United States Coal Commission

BY

Non-Union Operators

OF SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA

JANUARY 12, 1923

UNITED STATES COAL COMMISSION,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Gentlemen:

These operators of West Virginia have no proper place before your board. Our own labor difficulties have never deprived the people of their coal: rather we have always supplied the nation when there were labor disturbances elsewhere. Our mines are not over-developed; instead we must constantly expand them to meet the demand for our coal. Our business is not seasonal; on the contrary we have the central west throughout the year and the lake trade to serve in summer, the industries of the East and New England to support and a foreign commerce to sustain, all of which keeps us constantly engaged. Our prices, as a whole, have created no scandal; rather we have always joined hands with the Government in every effort to control the whole market in the interest of the public. And, on only rare occasions—and then due to outside influences—have our transportation difficulties risen to the dignity of a public menace. On these accounts we do not belong in the throng which crowds your ante room to explain their misdeeds.

And yet, we men of West Virginia are here. You have drawn us in. The public will not be satisfied unless we appear. We have come, therefore —and gladly—to say this one thing and to prove it:

West Virginia's difficulities have all been imported. They were carried into our borders. And they originate in the fact that others having fallen into a quagmire are and have been trying to drag us in with them.

That this may be apparent, we recite our simple story from the beginning.

The coal bearing part of southern West Virginia is extremely mountainous and rough—a country of deep and narrow mountain gorges which afford the only low level routes through which the railroads and the public roads can be driven. Only three practical passageways across the State from the seaboard to the Ohio River valley are available. Because of the mountain peaks, direct rail communication between the north and south portions is so difficult as to be next to impossible. There is little level ground.

In these gorges, the coal veins outcrop. Here is found the coal of the greatest variety and of the best quality in any district of similar size in the world.

At the eastern outlet of these gorges is the port of Norfolk, the gateway to the commerce of New England and the world. At the western end of these gorges begins the great coal consuming district of the Middle West.

The people in both directions from these mines have come to depend upon this assortment of coal. Three great railway systems were built on, and sustained by, the commerce which these mines create.

Prior to the opening up of the mines, the country generally was an

almost unbroken forest; practically none of it was, or is, fit for agriculture. Towns and even hamlets were small and few because there was nothing to sustain community life. The tide of emigration, seeking the fertile plains to the west, flowed around this barren mountain section. Those who eked out an existence there were descendants, generally speaking, of the trappers and hunters who made our post-colonial days romantic with their pioneer spirit.

With the advent of the coal operator in this region came the modern community life. Coal mining demands labor in quantity. None being available, the operator had to carry his workmen with him. He had to provide for them all the creature comforts—houses, food, clothing, water supply, light, medical attention, sanitation, and later, roads, schools, churches, recreation, and amusement.

The uncertainties of any new commercial venture accompanied these early mining operations. In addition, the pioneers were under the handicap of having to try to introduce an unknown coal to patrons already supplied. For years they struggled for existence. The operator and his employee ventured together into this field. There was hope, but hardly that either would there establish a permanent home. Even with land available, few cared to make investment in homes. For this reason the residences of officers and employees alike were constructed by the mining companies as parts of the plants. This practice remains.

Under these conditions, the railroads, the mining industry, and the communities grew together.

Of the group of mines here represented, The New River Coal Field was first developed. Then followed Pocahontas in 1880, and the Tug River, Thacker, Logan and Winding Gulf fields at much later dates.

The close contact inspired by a common risk and a primitive life brought naturally an intimate and friendly relationship between owners and employees such as arises between captain and crew of a ship in peril from a storm. This relationship has always existed, exists today, and will continue to exist unless ruptured—as has frequently been threatened—by outside influences. Many of the employees of former days are the employers of today; relations entered into in these fields are enduring.

This relationship developed into community action. Prior to the development of the coal mines, school facilities were of the most primitive type; the teachers were poorly qualified and poorly paid, while the school terms lasted but two or three months a year. In their places today, are up-to-date school buildings which compare favorably with similar institutions of larger towns. The teachers are well educated and well trained; in most instances they are graduates of normal schools. Their salaries are as large as those paid in many cities, and quite frequently their services are obtained in competition with the larger communities.

With the development of this community spirit came frequent meetings

of a public, semi-public, and social nature, for the promotion of the common welfare. All communities have their churches around which center many of these activities. These churches were erected and are maintained by joint contributions of employers and employees.

Again the same community spirit inspired modern roads built with money raised by bond issues directed by popular vote. So large a proportion of the employees own their automobiles, that finding suitable ground for garages is difficult. Their children are carried to school in motor busses operated at public expense.

In addition to assuming their share of expense for community development, each coal company provides competent physicians whose services, including medicines, are furnished the employees at a small fixed charge—usually two dollars per month per family. Many of the companies provide at their own expense, without any charge whatever to employees, trained and certified nurses, and adequate emergency hospital facilities at the mines.

House rents are usualy based on a charge of two dollars per room per month. Electric power and lights are furnished at prices less than half the rates paid in cities. Employees are permitted to use all the coal they want for culinary and heating purposes, for which a small fixed charge is made, usually about one dollar per month per family.

These items entail a heavy fixed charge upon the coal companies for which the only compensation is satisfied and contented employees.

The necessities from the beginning have demanded that the companies maintain stores. In these the prices of food, clothing and other necessaries of life are so low as to call forth protests and criticism from independent stores in neighboring small towns and to induce customers from the larger towns frequently to go considerable distances to patronize these company stores.

Athletics, including baseball, football and other outdoor sports, play an important part in the life of these communities. Athletic grounds exist practically everywhere and local and inter-plant contests frequently occur. Other recreation facilities include moving picture theaters and other indoor entertainments.

We have gone fully into these details, not to boast but to depict the spirit which has grown because employers and employees sustained the proper relations to one another. We have had from the beginning the spirit which great corporations everywhere are trying to build by all the arts of modern welfare work. Because of it, we employers and employees found, together, a wilderness and caused it to blossom into an advanced community.

Up to this point, we have shown our relations among ourselves. We begin here to show what our relations have been to the rest of the country —what our internal accord has meant to the national community.

In her natal year, 1863, West Virginia began to contribute to the bituminous coal needs of the nation. She produced that year 4½% of the total national consumption. The increase in production thereafter was naturally slow, owing to the difficulties and handicaps hereinbefore described. It was not until the coal fields, heretofore mentioned, began to be developed that its percentage of production materially increased. But in 1889, the State produced 6½% of the bituminous coal of the country, and by 1915 had made such progress that it produced 17.4% of the nation's coal. In tonnages, West Virginia produced in 1863, 444,648 tons; in 1889, 19,252,995 tons; in 1915, 77,184,069 tons; and in 1918, 89,935,839 tons.

Beginning shortly after the Civil War and down to 1915, with certain temporary exceptions, the average price of West Virginia coal seldom, if ever, varied more than 25%. That is to say, from the time when West Virginia coal first entered the market until the Great War in Europe, fluctuation in the price of this coal was small and unimportant.

When in 1916, it became evident that this country would become involved in the Great War—a year previously it had become involved in it in an economic way—bituminous coal became of the first importance. By reason of the excessive demand for it by the manufacturers who were struggling to fill war orders from Europe, as well as America, and by reason of the growing shortage of railroad transportation and the inability of the carriers to purchase equipment for prompt delivery, all the coal which was needed could not be supplied. Therefore the price was forced, by urgent buyers, to unheard of heights.

Our country's entry into the Great War in 1917 brought the coal industry under Government control. With it came the incessant demand from the United Mine Workers of America for increased wage scales. The granting of these demands; the increased wages conceded to other unions by manufacturers who furnish the materials used at the mines; the consequent increase in railroad rates; and the increases in vessel rates, so increased the prices of coal that our American customers were, and have been, compelled to pay from two to three times the former price for coal. They cannot understand it. Nor will they be satisfied nntil prices are deflated, not only on coal at the mines, but of the railroad rates, and all other distribution charges accruing between the mine price and the consumer's door.

Deflation did start in promptly on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918. It became apparent to buyers early in 1919. The downward trend was halted sharply in the fall of 1919 when the United Mine Workers of America—demanding an increase rather than a decrease in wages—called a general strike, which after six weeks again increased the price of coal. Dr. Garfield, then United States Fuel Administrator, insisted that the United Mine Workers Union modify its demands. It refused. And it sneceeded in securing a snbstantial increase effective November 1, 1919. It won a still

greater increase August 16, 1920, through the United States Bituminous Coal Commission appointed by the President.

Peace restored, after the 1919 strike, the law of supply and demand began to reassert itself in 1920. The tendency toward lower prices was short-lived. The outlaw strike of the railways came in April. Terminal congestions and a stoppage of coal movement resulted. Public officials and the newspapers became alarmed and incited panic among the people. And, at the critical time, Europe, to save itself from Bolshevism which was sweeping into western Europe from Russia, where it was finding a ready foothold because the factories were idle from lack of coal began to plead with American producers for coal. We did not have the coal to spare, bnt our public officials were convinced that the peace of the world depended upon our getting coal to Europe, and we did it. At this critical time, the gambling middlemen, at home and abroad, descended upon this distressing situation and created panic and prices which have shamed the industry.

This wild demand began to slacken in November, 1920. Early in 1921, it had entirely passed. Then, again, the inexorable law of supply and demand commenced to work. Again, deflation started. And, for the first time since 1916, prices went back to low levels, and in many instances greatly below the then cost of production.

Again the United Mine Workers of America, unalterably opposed to doing its share in this deflation, called a strike effective April 1, 1922, with the result known to all.

After the nation-wide strike of 1922, was called and after it became apparent that a runaway market was inevitable, Secretary Hoover appealed to the non-union operators, on May 15, 1922, to increase production to the uttermost and voluntarily to keep the price of coal on a fair basis. Several conferences were held at Washington at all of which the non-union operators showed a willing inclination and intention to comply with the request as made. What was know as "fair prices" were established at Mr. Hoover's request, and were approved by him. These prices were generally maintained and adhered to—by the smokeless operators so thoroughly as to receive the hearty commendation of the Secretary of Commerce. Notwithstanding these facts, a distinguished United States Senator, on the floor of the Senate, made a severe attack on the coal industry, accusing those engaged in it of profiteering. In response to that attack and in response to a letter, Mr. Hoover, on August 18, 1922, addressed a letter to the Honorable William E. Borah setting forth the facts as to the fixing of the prices of coal. In that letter he states:

> "Through these arrangements approximately 70% of the coal is moving today from the mines on a fair price basis." * * * "I

enclose for example a statement showing the coal sold under the fair price in the Smokeless Fields, as compared with profiteer coal from those districts." That statement is as follows:

SHIPMENTS FROM POCAHONTAS FIELD,

West Virginia, showing entire product and amount thereof sold during June, July and to August fifteenth, *at or below, and above the fair price.*

June—At and below fair price	1,981,776 tons
July—At and below fair price	1,225,930 "
Over fair prices	50,370 "
To August 15th—At and below fair price	708,215 "
Over fair price	25,185 "

President Harding made the coal situation, in connection with the strike of 1922, the subject of a message to Congress on August 18, 1922. After discussing the various efforts made to settle the strike and their failure by reason of the defiance by the United Mine Workers of America, of all sense of obligation to the public and to the Government, the President says:

> *"The simple but significant truth was revealed that, except for such coal as comes from the districts worked by the non-organized miners, the country is at the mercy of the United Mine Workers."*

We have now shown our relations and their fruits. We have produced coal in season and out of season. We have received modest prices except when a world upheaval created conditions beyond our control. Our record is that as soon as an abnormal situation disappeared, the normal tendency asserted itself and prices declined. We now come to a new set of conditions which were imposed upon us from without—and for reasons which we will recite.

From the beginning of the coal industry in West Virginia, it has been the policy of the operators to conduct the business on a non-union basis. This policy on the part of the operators is shared by a great number, if not all, of their employes, many of whom frankly state they will not work under the union; they will abandon mining rather than do so, and will seek other occupations. Notwithstanding the legal right of the operator and the miner to agree upon terms of employment satisfactory to themselves, we have, for a generation, been interfered with almost without cessation in every way the United Mine Workers of America could devise to accomplish the conquest of our State. They have employed all means from noisy oratory and false representations in private and in public, to leading armed groups, numbering many thousands of men,

across the State in open defiance of the State and Nation. Let us give you a brief outline of the history of the United Mine Workers of America's conspiracy to conquer West Virginia and its consequences.

The initial conspiracy had its origin in a contract entered into at a joint conference between the miners and operators of the Central Competitive Field in Chicago, January 17-28, 1898. From that contract we quote the eighth clause which is as follows:

> "THAT THE UNITED MINE WORKERS ORGANIZATION, A PARTY TO THIS CONTRACT, DO HEREBY FURTHER AGREE TO AFFORD ALL POSSIBLE PROTECTION TO THE TRADE AND THE OTHER PARTIES HERETO AGAINST ANY UNFAIR COMPETITION RESULTING FROM THE FAILURE TO MAINTAIN SCALE RATES."

(See Hearings before the Committee on Education and Labor, United States Senate, S-RES. 80, Page 394.)

The true meaning of the clause just quoted, as understood by the parties thereto, appears in the minutes of the various joint conferences held after that time, from which we give only three excerpts out of many which might be given.

At the conference held in Pittsburgh, January 18, 1899, John Mitchell, National President of the United Mine Workers of America, said:

> "I WANT TO SAY TO THE OPERATORS THAT AN EFFORT HAS BEEN MADE IN THE PAST YEAR TO CURTAIL THE WEST VIRGINIA COAL BY PREVENTING ITS SALE ON THE MARKET."

(See Hearings before the Committee on Education and Labor, United States Senate, S-RES, 80, page 395.)

At the same meeting, Mr. Ratchford, whose term of office as President of that organization had just expired, said:

> "I WANT TO MAKE A PROPOSITION HERE—THAT THE INTEREST OF THE WEST VIRGINIA MINERS, BY REASON OF THE EFFORTS OF OUR ORGANIZATION, HAVE BEEN HAMPERED AND INJURED MORE IN THE PAST YEAR THAN IN ANY YEAR SINCE THEY HAVE BEEN OPERATING IN THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA."

(See Minutes of Joint Conference of January 17-24, 1899.)

At the Joint Conference of 1902 John Mitchell, then President of said organization, further said:

"WE WANT THE CHECK-OFF SYSTEM FOR SEVERAL REASONS; FIRST, * * * BECAUSE THE PENNSYLVANIA OPERATORS COME HERE THIS YEAR AND RAISE CAIN WITH THE MINERS, BECAUSE THEY DO NOT ORGANIZE WEST VIRGINIA."

(See Hearings before the Committee on Education and Labor, United States Senate, S-RES. 80, page 399.)

This "conspiracy" of 1898 was referred to at practically every joint conference from that year forward, as the minutes of said conferences will show. It has been set up and proven in numerous suits in various courts of the country. It has never been denied and the courts have uniformly held it to exist and that it was unlawful.

That it has continued to the present is shown by the statement made by Mr. Fred Mooney, Secretary and Treasurer of District No. 17, United Mine Workers of America, and published in the *United Mine Workers Journal* of December 1, 1920, from which the following quotation is taken:

"FOR THE STRUGGLE IN MINGO COUNTY IS AN ECONOMIC ONE * * * IN FACT IT IS THE CONTINUANCE OF A STRUGGLE BEGUN IN WEST VIRGINIA SOME TWENTY-THREE YEARS AGO AND EXTENDING THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD."

The struggle to which he refers is of course the struggle to unionize the coal miners of West Virginia which the United Mine Workers of America had promised the operators and miners of the Central Competitive Field to do, in order to raise the cost of production of coal in West Virginia to such a point that it could not compete with the coal produced in the Central Competitive territory. This was a part of the consideration for the joint wage scale and the check-off which had been granted to the organization by the operators of the Central Competitive Field.

A further effect of the joint agreements in the Central Competitive Field has been to fix the wages of coal miners throughout the United States wherever the union exists and has control, because wages elsewhere have been fixed by the union with relation to the wages in the Central Competitive Field. This control of mine labor by one organization has materially affected the selling price of bituminous coal everywhere.

The United Mine Workers of America is frankly and fully committed

to the theory of a monopoly of mine labor in all the coal mines in the United States and has never omitted any act, lawful or unlawful, within its power to bring about that situation.

So tremendous and menacing is its power, by reason of the very large percentage of coal mines in the United States it now dominates, that when it arbitrarily calls a strike, as it did in 1919 and again in 1922, approximately 60% of the coal production of the country stops instantly and nothing except the production of coal in the non-union fields has saved the country from national calamities.

This enormous and widespread curtailment in production naturally and inevitably results in unduly high prices to the consumer, for the coal being produced, because consumers become panic stricken and bid against each other for the available supply. This reduced production and the panic of the buyers are not the only things that then contributed to the high price of coal, for the union, in order to increase the chances of making the strike a success, directed every possible effort and attack against the non-union fields to hamper and reduce their production, which efforts and attacks had to be resisted, including protection of the rights of non-union men to work—an expense which increased greatly the cost of production in the non-union fields. It may fairly be said that except as to the unusual situations heretofore referred to, the high prices of coal during recent years have been the direct result of the actions of the United Mine Workers of America in calling nation-wide strikes, such strikes being made possible by its absolute control of mine labor in such a large part of the country.

Not only does it aim at the absolute control of all mine labor in the United States, but it has further declared its intention to secure a world-wide control. In line with this object, this organization made efforts during the past summer to influence British coal miners to prevent the shipment of any British coal to the United States while this organization was on strike.

The history of the efforts of the United Mine Workers organization to organize West Virginia is made up of a series of crimes against persons and property without any parallel, certainly in the United States. Short reference will be given to some of the outstanding acts of violence.

In 1912 the Union made a determined effort to organize the Kanawha Field. Trouble first broke out on Paint Creek and then spread to Cabin Creek and New River, both being non-union fields. Martial law was declared on September 2, 1912, and the whole of the State's militia was stationed on the two creeks mentioned. This trouble was made the subject of a very exhaustive investigation by a committee of the United States Senate. The whole issue was whether or not the union would be recognized by the operators. The trouble continued for more than a year, during which time there was a great deal of violence of all kinds, including the shooting up of mines by members of the union.

On November 16, 1917, members of the United Mine Workers of America on strike shot up the town of Glen White, West Virginia, under a well-devised and well-carried-out plan, preceded by the purchase of high-power rifles for that purpose. Six of these men were tried and convicted of attempt to commit murder in the first degree, including Toney Stafford, international organizer of the United Mine Workers of America, and Ed. Snyder, President of Glen White Local of that organization, each of whom was sentenced to five years in the State penitentiary, the other four pleading guilty and receiving one year sentences. Three of them were ordered deported by the United States Government on account of their being undesirable aliens. Four others were not prosecuted because they turned State's evidence and it was upon their testimony chiefly that the above convictions were had. One of the men implicated was never apprehended. It will be observed that this shooting up of the town of Glen White occurred during the war, when all patriotic citizens were straining every nerve and energy to supply the fuel needs of the country, and had for its direct object the stopping of production of the mine situated there, notwithstanding that a representative of the Federal Government had made an investigation and had decided that the miners were wrong in their contention.

Perhaps the most consistent, persistent and typical example of the length to which this organization will go to accomplish its purpose, is that of Willis Branch in Fayette County, West Virginia. The original difference involved six or eight coal companies and was confined to one issue, namely, the refusal of the companies to enforce the closed union shop (by refusing work to applicants not members of the union) and the check-off, having agreed to the union wage scale and all other conditions imposed by the union. The village of Willis Branch and the mine situated there seemed to have been selected for the violence, to be here described, by reason of the local situation, being in a very isolated position—a village in a narrow valley surrounded by mountains, from the tops of which the village was within rifle range. Beginning in the latter part of the summer of 1919 and ending in the early part of the summer of 1921, this village and mine were subjected to a series of attacks by rifle fire, and the burning and dynamiting of buildings. The rifle fire from the mountains recurred at frequent intervals during the whole of the period mentioned, as many as one thousand shots being fired in single instances. The hoist house near the mine was broken into and the machinery destroyed, putting the mine out of business for several months. About the time it was repaired and the mine ready to start up again the head house was burned down, again putting the mine out of business. Finally, on the 22d of May, 1921, the tipple was saturated with gasoline or kerosene, set on fire and destroyed, together with many railroad cars belonging to the Virginian Railroad Company and much trestlework, railroad ties, etc., from which damage the company has never recovered. The superintendent's house

was dynamited. The poles on which the power lines were strung were cut down. The head house at the mine was burned. The power house, a stone building, was blown up.

For these Willis Branch outrages, Walter Romine, Secretary of the Local Union of the United Mine Workers of America, was tried, convicted and sent to the penitentiary for six years. George Barret, International Organizer of the United Mine Workers of America, was tried and convicted, after he procured a change of venue, and sent to the penitentiary for six years, where he now is. John Kidd, Lee Donald, and Clarence Donald were also convicted and sentenced to the penitentiary. A large number of other members of the organization have been indicted, but have not yet been tried. including Lawrence Dwyer (otherwise known as "Peggy" Dwyer), International Executive Board member; James Gilmore, who was President of District 29 (in which Willis Branch is located) during a part of the time mentioned; John Sprouse, who was also President of District 29 during a part of this time; and Frank Williams, a member of the District Board of District 29. Along with them were indicted George Lafferty and Tom Lewis, alias Tom Canadian, who were not members of the United Mine Workers of America, but who were desperate characters used by the United Mine Workers of America in making these attacks, and their families participated in the relief fund provided by the above union for families of their members.

Another man deserving special mention for his activities in connection with the Willis Branch violence, is David Robb, stated, in numerous written confessions of members of the union who participated in said violence, to have acted as financial agent of the Union in supplying guns and ammunition. He afterwards participated in the Mingo violence in the same capacity. His history is said to take him back to the Coronado Coal Company destruction and to the Colorado strike.

The union also made an effort to organize the miners in Mingo County, West Virginia, and the means they adopted were to make night and day attacks on the mining camps and tipples by shooting into them and at the miners, who remained at work, with high-power rifles and guns of every description. Several tipples were dynamited or burned and a great deal of property was ultimately destroyed, and twenty-eight lives lost. Here again the only issue was recognition of the union by the operators.

The armed march on Logan County in 1921 was an effort to intimidate the non-union miners of Logan County and to forcibly organize them. This march was the most pretentious effort to force unionization on non-union men that has yet been made. The marchers, estimated to be 10,000 in number, fully armed and equipped with all the arms, ammunition and supplies necessary to fit out an army, started in Kanawha County in the unionized fields, and marched thence fifty miles, or more, across the country, commandeering

arms, supplies and trains *en route*. They were met on the border of Logan County by the non-union miners and other supporters of law and order and their march was stopped. The Federal Government soon after that sent United States soldiers to maintain law and order and the marching miners finally were sent home.

Your Commission is considering the industry as a whole. From others, you have received a recitation of their situations. From us, you here received an exposition of our own case. Speaking now as part of the whole industry, we believe you will find all operators and all miners in substantial agreement on the following facts:

The shortage of coal in no period is, or has been, due to lack of capacity in the mines to produce coal; no one can seriously contend that this is the case. There were in 1910, according to Geological Survey figures, 5,818 mines in the United States, and in 1920, on the same authority, 14,766 —an increase in the decade of 154%. During the same period and on the same authority, the production of coal in the country in 1910 was 416,000,000 tons and in 1920 was 569,000,000 tons—an increase of only 37%. We think that production and consumption are sufficiently close to one another for figures to be interchangeable for present purposes. The disparity shown above between the 37% increase in consumption and the 154% increase in the number of producing mines is, in our opinion, a complete answer to any suggestion that the mine capacity is insufficient.

If the supply of coal is insufficient, after this show of capacity, the cause must be sought in some other direction. To assist you in that direction we recite:

Our mines, today, are running at less than 50% capacity. This is due solely to a lack of transportation. We cannot supply our market if the railroads cannot carry more than half of what we can produce.

As we have shown, every period of shortage—except that caused by the war demand—has been preceded by a strike of the union miners.

This leads us to suggest: Stripped of all non-essentials, the two questions before you are:

(1) How can the periodical interruptions of coal production be stopped?

(2) How can the wild fluctuations of coal prices be brought to an end?

Answering these questions categorically, the interruptions of production can be stopped if you can arrange to prevent, forever, the union from calling a nation-wide strike. In this connection your particular attention is called to the vital distinction in the principles involved between a "local" and a

"national" strike. In a "local" strike the effects are confined to the employers and employees directly concerned in a personal or local issue; whereas in a "national" strike the issues are political rather than economic in character, and bring suffering, loss and disaster to the general public.

The price fluctuations will disappear if, and when, the great strikes cease and when the railways can carry our coal to market.

Your Commission represents the whole people of the United States. If you feel that the consumers should continue to pay present—or higher—prices for coal, the miners' union should be encouraged by new concessions. If you feel that the people are paying prices which are too high, an effective curb should be put upon its activities—by removing exceptions to the anti-conspiracy laws, and by protecting all American citizens in their right to work unmolested under such conditions as they elect.

Respectfully,

SMOKELESS COAL OPERATORS ASSOCIATION OF WEST VIRGINIA,
POCAHONTAS OPERATORS ASSOCIATION,
NEW RIVER ASSOCIATION,
WINDING GULF COAL OPERATORS ASSOCIATION,
TUG RIVER COAL OPERATORS ASSOCIATION,
LOGAN COAL OPERATORS ASSOCIATION,
OPERATORS ASSOCIATION OF WILLIAMSON FIELD,

By WM. D. ORD,
Chairman, Joint Committee.

BLUEFIELD, W. VA.,
P. O. Drawer 868.

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